

September 14<sup>th</sup>, April 24<sup>th</sup>, December 30<sup>th</sup>, February 14<sup>th</sup>, September 6<sup>th</sup>. If you were born between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1944 and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950, you would have been glued to the television that December in 1969 as the man on the television pulled out names from capsules and called out dates. All in all, 195 birthdays were called to serve from that lottery.

This national draft system was made to correct perceived inequalities in the locally based draft boards. The topic of a military draft brings about all sorts of mixed feelings and a Sunday sermon is not the time to unravel all the complexities that the Vietnam War era brought about.

Throughout much of modern history, a draft system was a way of enlisting men to serve in the armed forces. Having your number called could bring about all sorts of emotions: anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. The draft has been on the news lately as Russian citizens are fleeing the country to avoid fighting in Ukraine. In our country, we thank those veterans who served when drafted. We thank those veterans who volunteered to serve.

We are starting a new sermon series throughout the book of 2 Timothy titled draft. Each week will center around a different meaning of the word draft. This week we focus on draft as in a military draft. Our title is “Draft: Called to Defend.” Each week we will focus on different aspects of the ministry: who, how, what, and why. This week we’re focusing on the “who?” **BECAUSE THE FATHER HAS CALLED US TO HIS SON BEFORE AGES BEGAN, WE GUARD THE GOOD DEPOSIT BY THE SPIRIT.**

Paul writes to Timothy his protégé, **“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,”** I. The Father has called us to a holy calling apart from anything we've done (v. 8-9).

Who has been called to minister? Dear Christian friend, the answer is you! You have been predestined, elected, drafted to eternal life in Christ Jesus. You did not choose Christ. Christ chose you. From before God created the universe, the Father had you in mind to be saved. It was not because He foresaw your holy living. It was not because of how spiritual He knew you'd be. He didn't even choose you because of how faithful you'd be. Not unlike a lottery draft, your number was called. Although God does not toss dice, He chose you apart from anything worthy or worthwhile in you. He chose you **“...not because of [y]our works but because of his own purpose and grace.”** He chose you out of love.

Choosing to enlist is a wonderful way to serve your country, but if you chose, in the trenches you can second guess yourself. Was it the right choice?

Maybe I should have stayed home and kept working at Wal-Mart. Is it worth sacrificing my life? You chose service and there's the temptation to reject service.

If it were up to us, we would never choose this life of following Christ. If we knew how much suffering and sacrifice it would involve, we would have never enlisted. Our old, sinful nature would be content to live an average life while Satan's forces captured city after city, slowly plunging the world into darkness.

The doctrine of election is one of comfort. Our Lutheran forefathers wrote, “Likewise, he desired to guarantee my salvation so completely and certainly— because it could slip through our fingers so easily through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh or be snatched and taken from our hands through the deceit and power of the devil and the world. For he has preordained this salvation through his eternal intention, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and he has placed it for safekeeping into the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us away” (FC SD XI 46).

Which ties into our second point, II. The Son has brought life and immortality to light to guard us until that Day (v. 10-12). Paul continues, **“and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.”**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you have been drafted to serve from before the foundation of the world. But how can you know that? Can you take a peek at the answers in the back of the Book of Life? Can you think deep thoughts to get into the mind of God? Can you just assume it because you feel special, you *feel* like you're one of the elect?

No, Paul spells it out, God's desire for you has been **“...manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”** You have been drafted to fight in God's army, but the call to arms has you learn at Christ's feet. The cross is a signal on a hill that serves as the rallying point for the Church Militant. In baptism you don the uniform of Christ's own righteousness. In holy communion you receive the rations of Christ's very body and blood to strengthen and sustain you for the fight in the week ahead. In the Bible preached, read, and taught you receive orders from the Commander Himself.

What do you do when you doubt whether you are truly saved? Conversely, what do you do when you have so called Christian friend who uses the doctrine of election to live the life of an ungodly pagan? She might say, “I can't be damned to hell, God chose me, and He can't change His mind!” In both cases, cling to Christ

in His Word and Sacrament. Trust that your salvation is in Christ alone who is able to guard you until that day.

Who? God is recruiting servicemen and women to His army. But it is not simply hearing your number called that makes you a serviceman. The drill sergeant beats it into you in boot camp. The endless drills and training makes you into a serviceman. The long nights on the battlefield, in the helm of the ship, on the airfield, or in the skies make a soldier, airman, and sailor.

And so, with confidence that Jesus Christ has won the battle, fights for us, and equips us for battle, we serve as those called by God. Knowing finally, III. The Holy Spirit has empowered us to guard the good deposit (v. 13-14). Paul gives these directions to Timothy, **“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”**

Our sermon series is draft, and our subtitle today is “Called to defend.” Dear Christian friend, you have been elected from before the foundation of the world to eternal life in Christ Jesus. But this way of life is not without challenges. No young man drafted in that 1969 draft sincerely said to himself, “Yippee! The United States is paying for an extended vacation to Da Nang!” War brings untold hardships and sufferings, yet we honor those who have served, fought, and died for us.

Christianity is no vacation either, but God provides us what we need to guard the good deposit entrusted to us. How? By following **“the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”** Keep coming to Church to receive the gifts of Jesus Christ mentioned earlier. Surround yourself with Christian friends and support. Immerse yourself in prayer and devotion.

It is by the Holy Spirit that the whole armor of God is placed on us: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, readiness by the gospel of peace as shoes, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. It is from the Holy Spirit working in us that this salvation and holy calling from before ages began is fanned into the flame through a faith that is sustained by word and sacrament.

Draft: called to defend. Who is called to minister? You! Out of love, the Father has drafted you from before eternity to salvation in Christ Jesus. It wasn't because of any quality or value in you. Eternal salvation lies in knowing Jesus Christ, the Savior of humanity who is our great defender and brother in arms. From a foundation of Word and Sacrament, we can go forth by the Holy Spirit to defend the faith as we are strengthened to service to those around us. Amen!